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Swahili, a Bantu language, is a lingua franca serving an estimated 45 million inhabitants in Africa as "the language of culture, education, and communication." The author, who has spent 35 years in East Africa, notes the regional variations in Swahili, and the standardization which is taking place throughout East Africa. The Institute of Swahili Research, formerly the Inter-Territorial Swahili Language Committee, is engaged in setting up a Standard Swahili acceptable to the great majority, and in encouraging a high grade of Swahili literature. The contrastive phonological analysis of Swahili-English presented in this paper is based on the Standard Inter-Territorial Swahili of East Africa. It is intended to be a practical study and analysis of help to English-speaking students who are learning and studying Swahili. (AMM)

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A PHONOLOGICAL CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS NORTH AMERICAN ENGLISH—STANDARD SWAHILI

By Milan G. P. de Lany, Chairman of the Swahili Department, Defense Language Institute, Presidio of Monterey, California.

INTRODUCTION

Swahili has become one of the major languages of Africa. It is a lingua franca serving scores of tribes in the whole of East Africa and the eastern Congo. It is also understood by many along the borders of Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, the north-west coastal strip of Madagascar, portions of the Somalia coast, and on the islands between the mainland and Madagascar, which include Zanzibar and Pemba.

South of the Sahara, stretching through the Congo Basin, through Angola, through the whole of East Africa, and through the Rhodesias, Mozambique, down to Zululand in South Africa, the tribes are almost *all Bantu tribes*. The Bantu languages and dialects have a characteristic morphological structure of their own, juxtaposing and agglutinative in nature. Many of the basic lexical items are also related, e.g.:—

	Person	*People*	*Tree*	*Hand*
Swahili (E. Africa)	mtu	watu	mti	mkono
Congo Swahili	mutu	watu	muti	mukono
Luganda (north)	omuntu	abantu	umuti	omukono
Chagga (Tanzania)	mdu	wandu	mri	kuwoko
Zulu (far south)	umuntu	abantu	umuti	umukono
Herero (south west)	omundu	ovandu	omuti	omukono

Swahili is a Bantu language, and as a lingua franca it has assimilated many words from other languages, including a fair number from the Arabic and the English language. Thus, because of the many tribal languages, Swahili is of necessity the language of inter-territorial and inter-tribal communication, and in our era of civilization, it is the language of culture, education and communication serving a vast portion of Africa, apart from some European languages.

According to the latest census estimates the population of areas affected by Swahili is as follows:

Tanzania	10,310,000
Kenya	9,104,000
Uganda	7,367,000
Rwanda	2,850,000
Burundi	2,650,000
Congo	15,000,000
	47,281,000

Allowing for about a third of the Congo population understanding and speaking Swahili, but including fringe areas of neighbouring countries, the coast line, Zanzibar and other islands, one can estimate that the Swahili language serves some 45 million inhabitants in Africa.

The differences between Standard Swahili as used in East Africa and Congo Swahili (Kingwana) are not so great. In fact, Swahili is being used more and more extensively throughout the Congo. It was officially proclaimed as the national language of Katanga, and so there too Swahili is not only being recognized but also standard-

ized. Comments have been made in this study on differences which may arise between Congo Swahili and Standard E. A. Swahili.

From the point of view of phonology one may ask: What is Standard Swahili? Which informants truly represent Standard Swahili? It is linguistically permissible in case of a lingua franca to be somewhat unorthodox and consider a cross-section or the usages of the majority as the norm, instead of relying on individual informants. The tribal mother tongue may in some cases affect the pronunciation of some speakers, since in some tribal languages the differentiation between R–L, SH–CH, Z–S, B–V, J–NJ, D–ND, etc. is a problem. In some areas there may be a definite aspiration of consonantal stops, and in others little or no aspiration. Aspiration, however, is not phonemic. Then there may be a tendency on the part of some speakers to use the bilabial stop /b/ somewhat implosively, and other speakers mildly explosively. It must be remembered that Swahili, with a very few exceptions, is the *second* language to most inhabitants of East and Central Africa. The first language is a tribal language until the children go to school and there learn Standard Swahili.

The author, who has spent 35 years in East Africa, 20 of which were spent in the field of education in various parts of Tanganyika and Kenya, has noted the above variations, but is also aware of the standardization which is taking place throughout East Africa as far as Swahili is concerned. In this respect the Inter-Territorial Swahili Language Committee, now the Institute of Swahili Research, has done a most commendable job by its research, in helping to set up a Standard Swahili acceptable to the great majority, and in encouraging a high grade of Swahili literature.

This contrastive phonological analysis, Swahili-English, is based on the Standard Inter-Territorial Swahili of East Africa. The author hopes to present herewith a practical study and analysis which will be of help to English—speaking students who are learning and studying Swahili.

BASIC CONSONANT PHONEMES IN NORTH AMERICAN ENGLISH

		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Velar	Glottal
STOPS	Voiceless	p			t		k	
	voiced	b			d		g	
AFFRICATES	voiceless					č		
	voiced					ǰ		
FRICATIVES	voiceless		f	th				h
slit	voiced		v	dh				
groove	voiceless				s	š		
	voiced				z	ž		
LATERAL	voiced				l			
NASALS	voiced	m			n		ŋ	
SEMIVOWELS	voiced	w			r	y		

The above table is the one used by H. A. Gleason in his book "An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics."

Comparing this table with the one that follows on 'Swahili Consonant Phonemes', it will be noted that /ž/ is the only consonant phoneme found in English but not in Swahili. On the other hand the following four phonemes /j/, /kh/, /gh/, and /ny/ are Swahili consonant phonemes not listed among the North American English consonant phonemes.

BASIC CONSONANT PHONEMES IN STANDARDIZED INTER-TERRITORIAL SWAHILI

		Bilabial	Labiodental	Apico-post dental	Apico-interdental	Fronto-palatal	Apico-Alveo-palatal	Dorso velar	Glottal
STOPS	unvoiced	p		t				k	
	voiced	b		d		j		g	
FRICATIVES	unvoiced		f	s	th		š	kh	h
	voiced		v	z	dh			gh	
AFFRICATES	unvoiced						č		
	voiced						(n) j		
TRILL	unvoiced								
	voiced			r					
LATERAL	unvoiced								
	voiced			l					
NASALS	unvoiced								
	voiced	m		n		ny		ŋ	
SEMI-CONSONANTS	unvoiced								
	voiced	w				y			

There are 27 basic consonant phonemes in standardized Swahili.

The following pre-nasalized consonants are regarded by some linguists, such as Dr. Carl Meinhof, as unit phonemes in Swahili, instead of consonant clusters:—/mb/, /mv/, /nd/, /nz/, /nj/, /ng/.

See explanation on next page.

Note on pre-nasalized consonants:
/mb/, /mv/, /nd/, /nz/, /nj/, /ng/.

The above have been omitted from the table of consonantal phonemes because:–

a. In some cases, they may be regarded as prenasalized units, the first element being pronounced simultaneously with the second.

b. On the other hand, in many instances when the nasal is a bound morpheme the speakers tend to insert a minimal transition between both elements.

This makes them clusters rather than unit phonemes. An explanation for the phenomenon could be the fact that the nasal element when occurring in the penultimate position as a bound morpheme would be stressed and become syllabic. In a medial position it may not be stressed, but nevertheless still be syllabic.

c. Note that the nasals, especially the bilabial /m/ can appear with all other consonants, mainly to form clusters, but possibly in some cases as a pre-nasalization. This can be a subject for further study and debate.
See section on Consonant Clusters.

As Pre-nasalized Phonemes:

a.	/mb/	ambia	/amb'ia/[1]	(tell)
		jambo	/j'ambo/	(hello)
		mbio	/mb'io/	(speedily)
		nyumba	/ny'umba/	(house)
b.	/mv/	utomvu	/ut'omvu/	(sap)
		mvua	/mv'ua/	(rain)
		mvuke	/mv'uke/	(steam)
		chumvi	/č'umvi/	(salt)
c.	/nd/	kwenda	/kw'enda/	(to go)
		matunda	/mat'unda/	(fruit)
		ndege	/nd'ege/	(bird)
		ndugu	/nd'ugu/	(brother)
d.	/nz/	nzige	/nz'ige/	(locust)
		mpanzi	/mp'anzi/	(sower)
		mainzi	/ma'inzi/	(flies)
		mlinzi	/ml'inzi/	(guard)
e.	/nj/	ǹjema	/nǰ'ema/	(good)
		vunja	/v'unja/	(break)
		njia	/nǰ'ia/	(road)
		kiwanja	/kiw'anǰa/	(open field)
f.	/ng/	nguo	/ŋg'uo/	(clothes)
		ngamia	/ŋgam'ia/	(camel)
		kengele	/keŋg'ele/	(bell)
		bangili	/baŋg'ili/	(bracelet)

As elements of clusters, or as syllabics where the nasal is stressed:

a.	/mb/	(The nasal as a stressed syllabic.)		
		mbwa	/*m*bwa/	(dog)
		mbu	/*m*bu/	(mosquito)
	/mb/	(The nasal as element of clusters, particularly where the nasal is a bound morpheme.)		
		alimbeza	/ali*m*b'eza/	(he scorned him)
		mbuji	/*m*b'uji/	(elegant person)
b.	/mv/	(The nasal as a stressed syllabic.)		
		mvi	/*m*vi/	(grey hair)
		(The nasal as element of clusters, particularly where the nasal is a bound morpheme.)		
		alimvusha	/ali*m*v'uša/	(he ferried him over)
		mvuvi	/*m*v'uvi/	(fisherman)

c. /nj/	(The nasal as a stressed syllabic.)		
	nje	/*n*je/	(outside)
f. /ng/	(The nasal as a stressed syllabic.)		
	nge	/ŋge/	(scorpion)
	ngwe	/ŋgwe/	(patch of ground)

SWAHILI CONSONANT PHONEMES

1. STOPS

a. The voiceless stops /p/, /t/, /k/ generally are not aspirated, or only weakly so. However, the influence of a previously acquired language in which stops are aspirated may be noticed in some Swahili speakers. In any case, aspiration is not phonemic. Some aspiration can be detected when these stops occur in initial or medial stressed positions, or when a stressed nasal precedes the stop, e.g.:—

Initially stressed:	paa	>	/p^{h}'aa/
	taa	>	/t'^{h}aa/
	kaa	>	/k^{h}'aa/
Medially stressed:	alipata	>	/alip^{h}'ata/
	alikata	>	/alik^{h}'ata/
	alitoka	>	/alit^{h}'oka/
Preceded by a stressed nasal:	mpe	>	/'*m*p^{h}e/
	nta	>	/'*n*t^{h}a/
	mke	>	/'*m*k^{h}e/
	alimpa	>	/ali'*m*p^{h}a/

Generally these voiceless stops are pronounced as in English medial stops after the fricative /s/.

					Engl. equiv.
/p/	popote	>	/pop'ote/	(everywhere)	Prospect
/t/	tafuta	>	/taf'uta/	(search)	estate
/k/	kukatika	>	/kukat'ika/	(come apart)	skate

b. The voiced stops /b/, /d/, /g/ are without crescendo voicing. An implosive characteristic is present with some speakers, but again absent with others. The implosiveness is not phonemic.

					Engl. equiv.
/b/	bomba	>	/b'omba/	(pipe)	bell, bomb
/d/	dada	>	/d'ada/	(sister)	dedicate
/g/	gogo	>	/g'ogo/	(long, trunk)	go, get

c. The glottal stop /?/ is not emphatic nor phonemic, and for that reason was not included in the table of consonant phonemes. A weak glottal stop is used in separating vowel clusters, which in allegro speech may hardly be discernable.

kuua	/ku?'ua/	(to kill)
waliooana	/walio?o'ana/	(they who inter-married)
aliiaua nchi	/ali?i?a'ua 'nči/	(he surveyed the land)

2. FRICATIVES

a. The labio-dental fricatives /f/, /v/ are pronounced as in English.

				Engl. equiv.
/f/	fafanua	/fafan'ua/	(explain)	after, fun
/v/	vilevile	/vilev'ile/	(also)	Vivian, vow

b. The apico-postdental fricatives /s/, /z/ are similar to those in English. The Swahili sounds tend to be formed in a more forward position, whereas in English they are more alveolar.

				Engl. equiv.
/s/	sasa	/s'asa/	(now)	success, sister
/z/	hizi zote	/h'izi z'ote/	(all these)	music, muzzle

c. The apico-interdental fricatives /th/, and /dh/ are pronounced as in English. Since these two sounds appear mostly in words of foreign origin, in Swahili they tend to change to apico-dental fricatives: the /th/ to /s/; and the /dh/ to /z/.[2]

			Engl. equiv.
/th/ thelathini	/thelath'ini	(thirty)	think, thin.

Occurring changes, th > s:—

thelathini	> selasini	/selas'ini/	
thumuni	> sumuni	/sum'uni (one eighth)	

			Engl. equiv.
/dh/ dhambi	/dh'ambi/	(sin)	this, that

Occurring changes, dh > z:—

dhambi	> zambi	/z'ambi/ (sin)	
dhaifu	> zaifu	/za'ifu/ (weak)	

d. There is only the voiceless apico-alveo-palatal fricative /š/ It is pronounced as in English

			Engl. equiv.
shika	/š'ika/	(hold)	shoe, shine
shusha	/š'uša/	(lower)	ship, bush

e. The dorso-velar voiceless and voiced fricatives /kh/ and /gh/ appear in Arabic loan words and are heard along the coast or among people who are influenced by Arabic. They gradually change: /kh/ to /h/; /gh/ to /g/ in the speech of Bantu people.[3]

/kh/	khabari	/khab'ari/	>	habari	/hab'ari/	(news)
	khafifu	/khaf'ifu/	>	hafifu	/haf'ifu/	(poor in quality)
/gh/	gharama	/ghar'ama/	>	garama	/gar'ama/	(cost, expense)
	ghariki	/ghar'ika/	>	garika	/gar'ika/	(flood)

f. The glottal fricative /h/ is voiceless and is pronounced as in English. In initial positions the /h/ is quite strong.

				Engl. equiv.
/h/	habari	/hab'ari/	(news)	house, have
	hana hela	/h'ana h'ela/	(he hasn't a penny)	behave

Compare:

atahitaji	/atahit'aji/	(he will need)
hatahitaji	/hatahit'aji/	(he will not need)

The initial /h/ in negative tenses must be very distinct.

3. AFFRICATES

a. There are two affricates, a voiceless /č/ and a voiced /j/. They are pronounced like the corresponding affricates in English. However, the voiced /j/ appears only when preceded by the nasal /n/, syllabic or not.

				Engl. equiv.
/č/	chachu	/č'aču/	(yeast)	church, chaff
	chochea	/čoč'ea/	(stir up)	
	nje	/'nǰe/	(outside)	engine, manger
	njaa	/nǰ'aa/	(hunger)	
	kimanjano	/kimanǰ'ano/	(yellow)	

The fronto-palatal stop /j/ replaces the affricate /ǰ/ in all other positions where it is not preceded by the nasal /n/. In some dialectal areas this phoneme /j/ may at times come near to being sounded as /ǰ/[4]

				Engl. equiv.
/j/	Jambo	/j'ambo/	(Hello, a matter)	In English the nearest sound may be as in 'duke' (dyuk) when palatalized, or a colloquial form of 'would you' >'wudya'
	maji	/m'aji/	(water)	
	mjomba	/mjomba/	(uncle)	
	moja	/m'oja/	(one)	
	jeusi	/je'usi/	(black)	

Exceptions: English loan words such as: Juni /ǰ'uni/, Julai /ǰul'ai/, and the Swahili word 'mjanja' /mǰanǰa/ (crafty)

4. TRILL

a. The /r/ is a weak apico-dental trill, and thus different from the English retroflex flap.

/r/	rafiki	/raf'iki/	(friend)
	rarua	/rar'ua/	(tear apart)
	ngurumo	/ŋgur'umo/	(thunder)

5. LATERAL

a. The lateral /l/ is not velarized as in English. The dorsum is kept down with the front vowels, and is raised a little with the central and back vowels.

/l/	lala	/l'ala/	(sleep)
	ua lile lililolala	/ua l'ile lil'ilol'ala/	(That flower which laid flat)

6. NASALS

a. There are four nasals. Three of them, the bilabial /m/, the apico-dental /n/, and the dorso-velar /ŋ/ are pronounced as in English. The fourth, the fronto-palatal /ny/ does not commonly exist in English. It is pronounced with the front of the tongue articulating against the hard palate. The nearest equivalent in English would be 'ny' as in 'canyon' or the medial 'n' as in 'onion', or 'opinion' when palatalized.

				Engl. equiv.
/m/	mtu	/'*m*tu/	(person)	mother, mama
	mimi	/m'imi/	(I)	mimicry
/n/	nini?	/n'ini/	(what?)	nip, minim
	nso	/'*n*so n'ono/	(fat kidney)	nonsense
/n/	kung'oa	/kuŋ'oa/	(to uproot)	singing

This dorso-velar /ŋ/ is also used initially in the Swahili language, whereas in English it is never initial. This applies also to the fronto-palatal /ny/.

				Engl. equiv.
	ng'ombe	/ŋ'ombe/	(cattle)	
	ng'aa	/ŋ'aa/	(shine brightly)	
/ny/	nyama	/ny'ama/	(meat)	canyon
	nyingi	/ny'ingi/	(many)	senyorita(Spanish)
	nyanyua	/nyany'ua/	(lift up)	onion (palatalized)
	fanya	/f'anya/	(do, make)	
	panya	/p'anya/	(rat, mouse)	

b. The bilabial nasal /m/, when it occurs in a penultimate position before a consonant, is stressed and syllabic if it represents a bound morpheme[5]. In other positions, though still a bound morpheme and syllabic, it is not stressed.

		Stressed position::—		*Unstressed position:—*	
/*m*/	mtu (a person)	/'*m*tu/	alimfahamu (he understood him)	/ali*m*fah'amu/
	mpe (give him)	/'*m*pe/	tulimtafuta (we looked for him)	/tuli*m*taf'uta/
	alimpa (he gave him)	/ali'*m*pa/	nilimjibu (I answered him)	/nili*m*j'ibu/
	mke (wife)	/'*m*ke/		
	mji (town)	/'*m*ji/		

When /m/ does not represent a bound morpheme then it becomes part of the consonant cluster in the final syllable and it is not syllabic.
See note on pre-nasalized consonants.

/m/	kuomba	/ku?'omba/	(to beg)
	alitamka	/alit'amka/	(he pronounced)
	simba	/s'imba/	(lion)
	utomvu	/ut'omvu/	(sap from a plant)

c. Disyllabic words may have a syllabic nasal: apico-dental /n/, fronto-patalal /ny/ or dorso-velar /n/ as the penultimate syllable and therefore stressed.

/n/	nta	/'*n*ta/	(beeswax)
	nne	/'*n*ne/	(four)
/ny/	nywa	/'*ny*wa/	(drink)
/n/	nge	/'ŋge/	(scorpion) Also written ng'ge.

However, when a prefix is added to the foregoing disyllabic words, then such a nasal is no longer syllabic.

/n/	nne	/'*n*ne/,	wanne	/w'anne/	(four)
/ny/	nywa	/'*ny*wa/,	kunywa	/k'unywa/	(to drink)

7. PALATALIZATION

a. There are four consonants: the bilabial voiceless stop /p/, the labio-dental fricatives /f/ and /v/, and the bilabial nasal /m/ which, when followed by the semi-vowel /y/, may give the impression of being palatal consonants. However, careful study of these, also with the aid of the tape recorder, with slow and reverse play, bears out the fact that in standard Swahili these are only palatalized.

/p/ + y + V occurs in two words only:

vitu vipya	/v'itu v'ipya/	(new things)
watu wapyoro	/w'atu wapy'oro/	(deceitful people)

/f/ + y + V occurs altogether in about six basic words: Two of which are:

kufyonza	/kufy'onza/	(to suck)
kufyeka	/kufy'eka/	(to cut or clear bush)

/v/ + y + V occurs more frequently, especially with the plural prefix *vi* — before a vowel.

vyote	/vy'ote/	(all)
vivyo hivyo	/v'ivyo h'ivyo/	(thus, in this way)

/m/ + y + V occurs rarely, actually only one word could be found, in addition to instances when the prefix 'mi' changes before a vowel stem to 'my'.

kimya	/k'imya/	(silence)
miti myeusi	/mye'usi/	(dark trees)
milango myeupe	/mil'ango mye'upe/	(white doors)

8. SEMICONSONANTS

The phonemes /y/ and /w/, normally regarded as semivowels, in Swahili perform more the function of semiconsonants. They are followed by a vowel and form the syllables y + V, w + V.

a. The fronto-palatal /y/.

/y/	yetu	/y'etu/	(our)	yet
	yeyote	/yey'ote	(any one)	yonder
	mbaya	/mb'aya/	(bad)	

b. The bilabial /w/.

wana	/w'ana/	(children)	wander, wine.
wewe	/w'ewe/	(you—pl.)	away
kahawa	/kah'awa/	(coffee)	

9. THE DIPHTHONGS

There are rising and falling diphthongs. Rising diphthongs should be considered C + V distribution from the viewpoint of stress and rhythm.

a. *Rising diphthong: /y/ + V, /w/ + V.*

/ya/	yangu	/y'angu/	(my)
	mbaya	/mb'aya/	(bad)
/wa/	wazi	/w'azi/	(open)
	miwani	/miw'ani/	(spectacles)
/ye/	yeye	/y'eye/	(he, she)
	aliye	/al'iye/	(he who is)
/we/	wewe	/w'ewe/	(you)
	kuweka	/kuw'eka/	(to place)
/wi/	mawingu	/maw'ingu/	(clouds)
	wimbo	/w'imbo/	(song)
/yo/	yoyote	/yoy'ote/	(anything)
	yowe	/y'owe/	(loud cry)
/wo/	wote	/w'ote/	(all)
	uwongo	/uw'ongo/	(falsehood)
/yu/	yule	/y'ule/	(that)
	huyu	/h'uyu/	(this)
/wu/	mwumba	/mw'umba/	(creator)

b. *Falling diphthongs: V + /y/; V + /w/.*

Note that true falling diphthongs are not very frequent or characteristic of Swahili. The boundary line between a vowel cluster and a true diphthong is not always clear. Most of the falling diphthongs occur in words of foreign origin.

/ay/	Nairobi	/nayr'obi/	(a city)			
	bainika	/bayn'ika/	(be clear)			
/aw/	plau	/plaw/	(plough),	shauri	/sh'awri/	(affair)
/ey/	bei	/bey/	(price);	teit'ei	/teyt'ei/	(skirt)
/ew/	geugeu	/gewg'eu/	(fickle)			
/oy/	boi	/boy/	(waiter);	goigoi	/goyg'oi	(useless, lazy)
/uy/	buib'ui	/buyb'ui/	(spider)			

c. *Falling—rising diphthong: V + /y/ + V.*

/aya/	haya	/h'aya/	(shame); mbaya /mb'aya/ (bad)
/aye/	baadaye	/baad'aye/	(by and by)
	anayetaka	/anayet'aka/	(he who wants)
/ayi/	shayiri	/shay'iri/	(barley)
/ayo/	yapatayo	/yapat'ayo/	(approximately)
/ayu/	payuka	/pay'uka/	(talk foolishly)
	mbayuwayu	/mbayuw'ayu/	(Swallow (bird))
/eya/	Mbeya	/mb'eya/	(town in T.T.)
	meya	/m'eya/	(mayor)
/iya/	kiyama	/kiy'ama/	(resurrection)
/iye/	aliyetaka	/aliyet'aka	(he who wanted)
/iyo/	hiyo	/h'iyo/	(that one); kiyowe /kiy'owe/ (a scream)
/iyu/	kiyunga	/kiy'unga/	(hole for a mast)
/oya/	kukoya	/kuk'oya/	(to be glad to achieve)
/oyo/	choyo	/č'oyo/	(greediness)
	moyo	/m'oyo/	(heart)
/uya/	uyabisi	/uyab'isi/	(stiff)
	mbuya	/mb'uya/	(paramour)
/uyo/	huyo	/h'uyo/	(that one)
/uyu/	huyu	/h'uyu/	(this one)
	kibuyu	/kib'uyu/	(calabash)

d. *Falling—rising diphthongs: V + /w/ + V.*

/awa/	hawa	/h'awa/	(these)
	kahawa	/kah'awa/	(coffee)
/awe/	mawe	/m'awe/	(stones)
	awepo	/aw'epo/	(let him be there)
/awi/	matawi	/mat'awi/	(branches)
	shawishi	/šaw'isi/	(persuade)
/awo/	mgawo	/mg'awo/	(distribution)
/ewa/	elewa	/el'ewa/	(comprehend)
	hewa	/h'ewa/	(air)
/ewe/	mwewe	/mw'ewe/	(hawk)
	aelewe	/a?el'ewe/	(he may understand)
/ewi/	haletewi	/halet'ewi/	(not brought to him)
/iwa/	liwa	/l'iwa/	(be eaten)
	miwa	/m'iwa/	(sugar cane)
/iwe/	jiwe	/j'iwe/	(stone)
/iwi/	siwi	/s'iwi/	(I don't become)
/owa/	towashi	/tow'aši/	(eunuch)
	lowama	/low'ama/	(wet)
/uwa/	kuwa	/k'uwa/	(to be)
/uwi/	uwivu	/uw'ivu/	(jealousy)
	uwingu	/uw'ingu/	(cloud)
/uwo/	uwongo	/uw'ongo/	(falsehood)

There are 5 vowel phonemes:

a. High front /i/ unrounded, and high back /u/ rounded. These are higher than the corresponding English vowels /I/ and /U/. They are not diphthongized.

Sometimes lower varieties occur.

/i/	ile	/'ile/	(that)	/u/	kutu	/k'utu/	(rust)
	miti	/m'iti/	(trees)		unga	/'unga/	(flour)
	mbili	/mb'ili/	(two)		sukuma	/suk'uma/	(push)

Mid-front /e/ unrounded, and mid-back /o/ rounded.

b. The /e/ is higher than the corresponding English vowel /E/. This refers also to /o/, which is lower than /o/ in *go*, but higher than /ɔ/, in *all*. Both vowels are not diphtongized nor obscured in unstressed positions. Lower varieties may occur.

/e/	peleka	/pel'eka/	(take)	/o/	okota	/ok'ota/	(pick up)
	ezeka	/ez'eka/	(thatch)		mtoto	/mt'oto/	(child)
	pete	/p'ete/	(ring)		ogopa	/og'opa/	(fear)

c. The low center /a/ is similar to the English /a/ in father. In unstressed positions it is slightly obscured, i.e. slightly raised and retracted.

/a/	baba	/b'aba/	(father)
	anataka	/anat'aka/	(he wants)
	lala	/l'ala/	(sleep)

d. Vowel length is not phonemic.
In the penultimate stressed position the vowel tends to be slightly lengthened due to the stress effect.

Note that when there are *two like* vowels at the end of a word, the final vowel has the value of a syllable, and the stress falls on the penultimate vowel. In speech this gives the impression of a long and stressed final vowel because there are two like vowels:—

e.g.	kataa	/kat'aa/	(refuse)
	pekee	/pek'ee/	(alone)
	bidii	/bid'ii/	(effort)
	nafuu	/naf'uu/	(respite)
	kondoo	/kond'oo/	(sheep)

11. VOWEL NUCLEI

a.

/aa/[6]	kataa	/kat'aa/	(refuse)
	baadaye	/baad'aye/	(eventually)
/ae/	aende	/a'ende/	(that he go)
	akae	/ak'ae/	(that he stay)
/ai/	tumaini	/tuma'ini/	(hope)
/ao/	patao	/pat'ao/	(approximate)
	wanaotaka	/wanaot'aka/	(who want)
/au/	sahau	/sah'au/	(forget)
	kauka	/ka'uka/	(become dry)
/ea/	tembea	/temb'ea/	(walk)
	mimea	/mim'ea/	(plants)
/ee/	mletee	/mlet'ee/	(bring to him)
	upekee	/upek'ee/	(solitude)
/ei/	bei	/b'ei/	(price)
	teitei	/teit'ei/	(skirt)
/eo/	leo	/l'eo/	(today)
	nimeona	/nime'ona/	(I have seen)
/eu/	geuka	/ge'uka/	(turn around)
	ungeuliza	/unge?ul'iza/	(you would ask)
/ia/	itikia	/itik'ia/	(respond)
	lia	/l'ia/	(cry)
/ie/	tulienda	/tuli'enda/	(we went)
	usiende	/usi'ende/	(don't go)
/ii/	kiini	/ki'ini/	(kernel)
	bidii	/bid'ii/	(effort)
/io/	masikio	/masik'io/	(ears)
	sioni	/si'oni/	(I don't see)
/iu/	kiu	/k'iu/	(thirst)
/oa/	toa	/t'oa/	(take out)

	waliondoa	/waliond'oa/	(they took away)
/oe/	atoe	/at'oe/	(he should issue)
	bomoeni	/bomo'eni/	(demolish ye)
/oi/	kikoi	/kik'oi/	(loin cloth)
	goigoi	/goyg'oi/	(useless)
/oo/7	kondoo	/kond'oo/	(sheep)
	jogoo	/jog'oo/	(cock, rooster)
/ou/	tulipounda	/tulipo'unda/	(when we built)
/ua/	fungua	/fung'ua/	(open)
	uandike	/uand'ike/	(that you write)
/ue/	afungue	/afung'ue/	(that he open)
	tueleze	/tuel'eze/	(let's explain)
/ui/	kuiba	/ku'iba/	(to steal)
	tuimbe	/tu'imbe/	(let's sing)
/uo/	tuone	/tu'one/	(let us see)
	funguo	/fung'uo/	(key)
/uu/	mkuu	/mk'uu/	(chief)
	kuuliza	/kuul'iza/	(to ask)

b. Combinations of 3 vowels in succession.

/aua/	aua	/a?'ua/	(survey)
/oea/	zoea	/zo'ea/	(get used to)
/uua/	kuua	/ku?'ua/	(to kill)
/uoa/	kuoa	/ku?'oa/	(to marry)

c. Combinations of 4, 5, or a rare one of 6 vowels can be found.

/uaua/	kuaua	/ku?a?'ua/	(to survey)
/aaui/	hawaaui	/haw?a?'ui/	(they do not survey)
/iiaua/	aliiaua nchi	/ali?i?a?'ua 'nči/	(he surveyed the land)
/eaua/	ameaua	/ame?a?'ua/	(he has surveyed)
/iooa/	waliooana	/walio?o'ana/	(those who intermarried)
/oeao/	wazoeao	/wazoe'ao/	(they who are used to)

/iooaua/ walioiaua nchi /walio?i?a?'ua 'nči/ (they who surveyed the land).

Such unusually large vowel combinations in sequence are rare, the frequency being less than .001%. Probably the above examples are the only ones to be found. Large vowel combinations are split into smaller vowel clusters by means of weak glottal stops.

12. CONSONANT CLUSTERS.

a. There are usually not more than two consonants in a cluster, and the first of these as a rule is a nasal, occasionally a fricative. Three consonant clusters are very rare. See note on prenasalization following the table of consonant phonemes.

/mp/	mpishi	/mp'iši/	(cook)
	alimpiga	/alimp'iga/	(he hit him)
/mb/	mbaya	/mb'aya/	(bad)
	kumbatia	/kumbat'ia/	(embrace)
/mt/	mtambo	/mt'ambo/	(contrivance)
	amtazama	/amtaz'ama/	(he looks at him)
/md/	mdila	/md'ila/	(coffee pot)
	alimdai	/alimd'ai	(he demanded of him)
/mj/	mjakazi	/mjak'azi/	(a female servant or slave)
	hamjaona	/hamja'ona/	(you have not seen yet)
/mk/	mkate	/mk'ate/	(bread)
	amka	/'amka/	(arise, get up)

/mg/	mgumu	/mg'umu/	(hard)
	alimgawia	/alimgaw'ia/	(he divided him a portion)
/mf/	mfano	/mf'ano/	(example)
	alimfunga	/alimf'unga/	(he tied him up)
/mv/	mvua	/mv'ua/	(rain)
	kimvita	/kimv'ita/	(Mombasa dialect)
/ms/	msafiri	/msaf'iri/	(traveller)
	alimsaidia	/alimsaid'ia/	(he helped him)
/mz/	mzigo	/mz'igo/	(load)
	walimzika	/walimz'ika/	(they buried him)
/mdh/	mdhamini	/mdham'ini/	(trustee)
/mš/	mṣhale	/mš'ale/	(arrow)
	kutelemsha	/kutel'emša/	(to lower)
/mgh/	mghafala	/mghaf'ala/	(thoughtlessness)
	kumgharamia	/kumgharam'ia	(to incur expense for one)
/mh/	mhubiri	/mhub'iri/	(preacher)
	walimhitaji	/walimhit'aji/	(they required him)
/mč/	mchanga	/mč'anga/	(sand)
	alimchoma	/alimč'oma/	(he stabbed/or burned him)
mǰ/[8]	mjanja	/mǰ'anǰa/	(clever fellow)
/mr/	mraba	/mr'aba/	(square)
	amrisha	/amr'iša/	(have orders issued)
/ml/	mlango	/ml'ango/	(door)
	kujumlisha	/kujumliša/	(to add up)
/mn/	namna/	/n'amna/	(sort, kind)
	hamna	/h'amna/	(there is none)
/mn'/	mnyama	/mn'ama/	(animal)
	alimnyang'anya	/alimnyan'anya/	(he robbed him)
/mŋ/	mng'oaji	/mŋo'aji/	(one who uproots)
	mng'arizo	/mŋar'izo/	(radiant look)
/nt/	binti	/b'inti/	(daughter)
	bantu	/b'antu/	(Bantu people)
/nd/	ndoo	/nd'oo/	(bucket)
	endesha	/end'eša/	(drive)
/ns/	jinsi	/j'insi/	(how, manner in which)
	aunsi	/'aunsi/	(ounce)
/nz/	nzige	/nz'ige/	(locust)
	anzisha	/anz'iša/	(begin)
/nš/	insha	/'inša/	(essay)
/nč/	inchi	/'inči/	(inch)
/nǰ/	njaa	/nǰ'aa/	(hunger)
	punje	/p'unje/	(seed kernel)
/ng/	angua	/aŋg'ua/	(hatch out)
	ngamia	/ŋgam'ia/	(camel)
/nn/	miti minne	/m'iti m'inne/	(four trees)
/rt/	sharti	/š'arti/	(compulsion)
/st/	stadi	/st'adi/	(capable)
	kustahili	/kustah'ili/	(to deserve)
/št/	kushtuka	/kušt'uka/	(to be startled)
/mst/	mstuko	/mst'uko	(alarm) Occurs in this case only.
/mšt/	mshtuo	/mšt'uo/	(startling movement)

b. In newly borrowed words of foreign origin, the original clusters may be preserved for a while, but by the process of assimilation these clusters are broken up by inserting a vowel.

/sk/	skuli	/sk'uli/	>	sukuli	/suk'uli/	(school)
/sl/	Islam	/isl'am/	>	Isilamu	/isil'amu/	(Islam religion)
/zl/	jizla	/j'izla/	>	jizila	/jiz'ila/	(measure of weight)

/kf/ wakf /w'akf/ > wakfu /w'akfu/ or wak'ifu /wak'ifu/ (dedicate)
/kt/ Oktoba /okt'oba/ > Oktoba /okot'oba/ (October)
/sr/ Israel /'israel/ > Israeli /isra'eli/ or Isiraeli /usura'eli/
/rs/ forsadi /fors'adi/ > forosadi /foros'adi/ (mulberry)
/fr/ frazila /fr'azila > farazila /faraz'ila/ (measure of weight)
/pr/ Aprili /apr'ili/ > Apirili /apir'ili/ (April)
/pt/ Septemba /sept'emba/ > Sepetemba /sepet'emba/ (September)

Note that in all such words as listed above, the accent shifts to the penultimate, although in isolated cases it may linger on the original accent, e.g.
frazila /fr'azila/.

c. *Long Consonants* are rare and occur in isolated instances of bilabial and dental nasals.
/m:/ mmoja /m:'oja/ (one)
mmumunye /m:umunye/ (gourd, vegetable marrow)
/n:/ wanne /w'an:e/ (four) This has developed from the word 'nne' /'ne/ (four) plus prefix 'wa' > wanne.

d. It is a definite characteristic of Bantu languages, Swahili in particular, that when words of foreign origin are adopted, and these contain clusters strange to Swahili, then in the process of assimilation one or more vowels are inserted to split up the cluster. Furthermore, since all Swahili words end in a vowel, foreign words ending in a consonant take on a final vowel, or drop the final consonant in the process of assimilation.

bicycle	baisikeli	/baisik'eli/
muscle	musuli	/mus'uli/
nerve	neva	/n'eva/
motorcar	motokaa	/motok'aa/
steamer	stima	/st'ima/ or /sit'ima/
screw	skrubu	/skr'ubu/ skurubu /skur'ubu/ or sukurubu /sukur'ubu/
trumpet	tarumbeta	/tarumb'eta/
electricity	eletirisiti	/eletir'isiti/ but because of the law of accent, this may become: eletiristi /eletir'isti/, or even eletristi /eletr'isti/
mayor	meya	/m'eya/

13. PHONOTACTICS.
Reference is made only to those sequential characteristics which do not occur in English.

a. Initial /ŋ/ followed by a vowel:

ng'ombe /ŋ'ombe/ (cattle)
ng'aa /ŋ'aa/ (shine brightly)

b. Initial /ny/ followed by a vowel:
nyanya /ny'anya/ (tomato)
nyuma /ny'uma/ (behind)

c. The nasals /m/, /n/, /ny/, and /ŋ/ in initial positions followed by another consonant. For a complete list of examples refer to section 12 a. under "Consonant Clusters."

d. Larger combinations of vowels. Refer to section 11 a. b. c. under "Vowel Nuclei" for a complete list of examples.

14. THE SYLLABLE

a. Each syllable ends in a vowel.
Yeye anafanya kazi vizuri
ye-ye a-na-fa-nya ka-zi vi-zu-ri.

b. For the above reason, from the viewpoint of distribution, all rising diphthongs should be considered as CV combinations.
Ex. *yeye*, *wewe*, ha*wa*, ha*wa*na, ha*ya*, *yo*te, ta*ya*ri, hu*yu*.

c. The semivowels in the rising and falling diphtongs do not double when preceded or followed by a vowel. The minimal sharp transition dividing syllables is preserved.
Ex. yeye, wewe, huyu, hawa.

d. An exception to the above is the nasal /m/ when it occurs as a bound morpheme, in which case it is syllabic as a lone consonant with no vowel after it.[9]

Ex. mtu	/'*m*tu/	(person)
mke	/'*m*ke/	(wife)
alimpa	/ali'*m*pa/	(he gave him)

See 6 (b) "Nasals"

15. STRESS AND RHYTHM.

1. *Word Stress:*

a. Swahili has dynamic stress, which, however, is not as strong as in English. The stress in Swahili is not phonemic.

b. Swahili differentiates three stresses on the word level:—

1. The primary stress is always on the penultimate syllable. When suffixes are added, then the stress shifts to the new penultimate.

piga	/p'iga/	(hit)
pigana	/pig'ana/	(fight)
nyumba	/ny'umba/	(house)
nyumbani	/nyumb'ani/	(in the house)
alitengeneza	/alitengen'eza/	(he repaired)
alimtengenezea	/alimtengenez'ea/	(he repaired for him)

The same happens when an enclitic follows the word:—

ulis'ema + je	ulisemaje	/ulisem'aje/	(what did you say)
wa'enda + pi	waendapi	/waend'api/	(where are you going?)
unat'aka + ni	unatakani	/unatak'ani/	(what do you want?)
ataf'uta + ye	atafutaye	/atafut'aye/	(he who seeks)
n'ina +cho	ninacho	/nin'ačo/	(I have it—the thing)
a'enda + po	aendapo	/aend'apo/	(where he goes)

2. Tertiary stress[10] which is separated by one or two syllables from the primary stress, or from another tertiary stress.

kujifunza	/kùjif'unza/ (to learn)
watanipenda	/wàtanip'enda/ (they will love me)
nikikutengenezea	/nikiku'tèngenez'ea/ (if I fix it for you)

3. Weak stress (or no stress) on the rest of the syllables.

kujifunza	/kujif'unza/ (to learn)
watanipenda	/watanip'enda/ (they will love me)
nikikutengenezea	/nikikutengenez'ea/ (if I fix it for you)

c. *Rhythm.*
The Swahili unstressed syllables are not squeezed between the stressed syllables as is the case in English, which has stress-timed rhythm. Swahili has syllable-timed rhythm. This means that the unstressed syllables in Swahili are more clearly pronounced and not obscured as in English. For this reason very limited obscuration takes place and affects only /a/. For obscuration in Swahili refer also to "Swahili Vowel Phonemes" 8 c.

d. When there are two or more vowels at the end of a word, then the penultimate vowel is stressed.

karabai	/karab'ai/	(pressure lamp)
karibia	/karib'iya/	(approach)
aliyeoa	/aliye?'oa/	(he who married)
makao	/mak'ao/	(dwelling place)
funguo	/fung'uo/	(key)

Double vowels (written as two like vowels) in final position carry the stress on the first of these vowels, the second playing the role of the final syllable.[11]

shangaa	/šang'aa/	(be amazed)
bidii	/bid'ii/	(effort)
kondoo	/kond'oo/	(sheep)
tambuu	/tamb'uu/	(leaf of betel nut)
upekee	/upek'ee/	(loneliness)

e. Monosyllabic interjections and the question introducer 'Je' are stressed, followed by a short silence.
L'o ! Mtu huyu hodari kweli. (My! This man sure is clever)
J'e, ungependa chai kidogo? (Say, would you like some tea?)

f. There are very few monosyllabic words in Swahili, and these are as a rule proclitic, and therefore unstressed:—

watu wa nchi	/w'atu wa ^'*n*či/	(people of the land)
mama na mtoto	/m'ama na ^mt'oto/	(mother and child)
kahawa au chai	/kah'awa au ^č'ai/	(coffee and tea)
baba ni mgonjwa	/b'aba ni ^mg'onǰwa/	(father is sick)
mahali pa nne	/mah'ali pa ^'*n*ne/	(fourth place)

g. Penultimate nasals become syllabic and stressed in disyllabic words. In longer words the penultimate nasal /m/ can become syllabic and stressed only if it is a bound morpheme; otherwise it becomes part of the consonant cluster. See para 6. b. under "Nasals." (Swahili Consonant Phonemes).

mtu	/'*m*tu/	(a person)
mti	/'*m*ti/	(a tree)
mto	/'*m*to	(a river)
mfo	/'*m*fo/	(torrent, river in flood)
mfu	/'*m*fu/	(corpse, dead person)
mja	/'*m*ja/	(one who comes, new comes)
nje	/'*n*je/	(outside)
nta	/'*n*ta/	(beeswax)
nne	/'*n*ne/	(four)
nge	/'ŋge/	(scorpion)
nywa	/*n*ywa/	(drink) imperative.

h. Irregularities in the accepted stress pattern, relating to stress on the penultimate syllable, occur in a few isolated cases. In most of these it is in words of foreign origin which have not been completely assimilated into the language. (See also under 12. b.)

e.g. lazima /l'azima/ (necessary, must)
ghafula /gh'afula/ (suddenly)
Amerika /Am'erika/ (America)
Afrika /'Afrika/ (Africa)

The following one and only minimal pair which could be found in the Swahili language may appear to contradict a previous statement that stress is not phonemic.

barabara /barab'ara/ (highway, main road)
barabara /bar'abara/ (well done, excellent)

16. SENTENCE STRESS

The primary stress in the centre of an intonation contour becomes the sentence stress. The latter suppresses all the word primary stresses which then become tertiary and the tertiary becomes zero. Stress may vary according to emphasis desired by the speaker.

e.g. Ulimpa shìlingi
Ulimpa shilìngi ng'api?
Unafànya n'ini hàpa?
Ninatàka kujif'unza Kiswah'ili lèo
Wagèni wawìli wàle walikimbia up'esi sàna.
Kw'enda sàsa!

17. INTONATION

Although Swahili is a Bantu language, and many Bantu languages are tone languages, Swahili is *not* a tone language.

Pitch Levels

1. Swahili intonation has 4 pitch levels. The 4th is rarely used except in special exclamations or expressions of stress.

2. The close terminals are:—

a. Sustained.
b. Falling, or fading.

The fading close terminal, while it does not cross the boundary of the lower tone, has a longer downward movement than is the case in English. This gives an impression that one has to deal with a new pitch level.

THE SWAHILI WRITING SYSTEM

Swahili has a phonemic writing system.

The Arabic script was used quite extensively in writing Swahili over a century ago. This was limited, however, to a few individuals of Arab descent, since the native African at that time was generally illiterate. The Arabic script is still used by a few Arabic speaking individuals, but this is mostly in connection with the practice of the Muslim faith and the reading of the Koran.

Now the Latin script is used wherever Swahili is spoken: in the schools it is used throughout all grades, the government uses it in all official matters, in the printing of newspapers, magazines, and books of various kinds the Latin script is used throughout.

The change-over from Arabic to Latin script took place about 1850, as from that time onward Swahili scholars started to produce dictionaries, grammars, and systematic studies of Swahili and other Bantu languages. Among the leaders in this field were: Dr. Ludwig Krapf, who came to Mombasa in 1844 and produced the first Swahili-English Dictionary. He was followed by Bishop Edward Steere, who produced his classic Swahili Handbook in 1875. In 1910 Dr. Carl Meinhof, an eminent German linguistic scholar of Bantu languages and phonology, produced several works of great importance. All these, and other scholars who followed, used the Latin script for Swahili. This was a natural development also in view of the fact that European influence increased throughout East Africa at that time.

There was another practical reason for favouring the Latin script. In Swahili phonology there are several phonemes for which the Arabic script did not have adequate orthographic symbols.

a. There was nothing in the Arabic literary script as introduced at that time which could represent the Swahili phonemes /p/ (p), /v/ (v), /č/ (ch). /n/ (ng') and /n'/ (ny) which are high frequency sounds in Swahili. Later individual writers of Swahili when using Arabic script introduced additional symbols to represent the above phonemes.

b. The dorso-velar voiced stop /g/ had to be written with a 'ghain' — /gh/, which represents in Arabic the uvular voiced fricative, but which is not native to Swahili.

c. Then the absence of adequate short vowel symbols in Arabic orthography, as over the high frequency of vowels, vowel endings, larger vowel clusters in Swahili—all were factors which favoured the use of the Latin script.

GRAPHEMES

The Swahili phonemes are represented by corresponding graphemes:—

Stops:

p — /p/,	pipa	/p'ipa/	(barrel)
t — /t/,	tatu	/t'atu/	(three)
k — /k/,	kukimbia	/kukimb'ia/	(to run)
b — /b/,	babu	/b'abu/	(grandfather)
d — /d/,	dada	/d'ada/	(sister)
g — /g/,	gogo	/g'ogo/	(tree trunk, log)

Fricatives:

f — /f/,	fifia	/fif'iya/	(become weak)
v — /v/,	vivi hivi	/v'ivi h'ivi/	(thus, in this manner)
s — /s/,	sasa	/s'asa/	(now)
z — /z/,	hizo zote	/h'izo z'ote/	(all those)
th — /th/,	thamani	/tham'ani/	(value)
dh — /dh/,	dhiki	/dh'iki/	(distress)
sh — /š/,	shona	/š'ona/	(sew);
	shusha	/š'uša/	(lower)
kh — /kh/, this is rarely used, it is replaced by /h/.			
	khabari >	habari	/hab'ari/ (news)
gh — /gh/, this is gradually being replaced by /g/.			
	ghala >	gala	/g'ala/ (storage place)
h — /h/,	hii hapa	/h'ii h'apa/	(this here)

Affricates:

ch — /č/, chai /č'ai/ (tea), chachu /č'ačυ/ (yeast)

j — /j/, this occurs after the nasal /n/, or occasionally in foreign non-assimilated words: jiografia, Julai

nje /'nje/ (outside); punje/p'unje/ (a grain)

/j/, when not preceded by the nasal /n/ it becomes an apico-dental palatalized stop.

jambo /j'ambo/ (hello, matter)

maji /m'aji/ (water)

Trill:

r — /r/, urembo /ur'embo/ (ornament)

Lateral:

l — /l/, lala /l'ala/ (sleep); lile /l'ile/ (that)

Nasals:

m — /m/, mimi /m'imi/ (I); mama /m'ama/ (mother)

/m/, mtu /'*m*tu/ (person); alimpa /ali'*m*pa/ (he gave him)

n — /n/, nani? /n'ani?/ (who?); nunua /nun'ua/ (buy)

/*n*/, nne /'*n*ne/ (four); nta /'*n*ta/ (beeswax)

ny — /ny/, nyama /ny'ama/ (meat); ninyi /ny'inyi/ (you-pl.)

/*ny*/, nywa /'*ny*wa/ (drink)

ng' — /ŋ/, ng'ombe /ŋ'ombe/ cattle; kung'oa /kuŋ'oa/ (to uproot)

/ŋ/, ng'ge — nge /'ŋge/ (scorpion)

Semiconsonants:

w — /w/, wewe /w'ewe/ (you-s.); wote /w'ote/ (all)

y — /y/, yeye /y'eye/ (he, she); yaya /y'aya/ (nurse)

Vowels:

a — /a/, sana /s'ana/ (very much)

takataka /takat'aka/ (rubbish)

e — /e/, pete /p'ete/ (ring)

endesha /end'eša/ (drive)

i — /i/, sisi /s'isi/ (we)

o — /o/, soma /so'oma/ (read)

boromoko la maji /borom'oko la m'aji/ (waterfall)

u — /u/, tuma (t'uma/. (send)

utumishi /utum'iši/ (service).

1. Stress is indicated here by an apostrophe preceding the stressed syllable.

2. In Congo Swahili /dh/ becomes /z/, e.g. dharau ⟩ zarau. The /th/ becomes /s/ e.g. thubutu ⟩ subutu; or it may become a /d/ e.g. thamani ⟩ damani; or sometimes it becomes /z/ e.g. thawabu ⟩ zawabu. "Congo Swahili Grammar" by W. F. Hunter, p. 9.

3. In Congo Swahili /kh/ has become /h/, and /gh/ has become /g/. "Congo Swahili Grammar" by W. F. Hunter, p. 9.

4. In Congo Swahili the phoneme /j/, represented by the grapheme *j* in E. A. Swahili, becomes a consonant /y/ in many cases. Moja /m'oja/ ⟩ moya /m'oya/ (one) majani /maj'ani/ ⟩ mayani /may'ani/ (grass), kujifunza /kujif'unza/ ⟩ kuyifunza /kuyif'unza/ (to learn), mwindaji /mwind'aji/ ⟩ mwindayi /mwind'ayi/ (hunter).

5. In Congo Swahili such an /m/ becomes an open syllable /mu/, and so the /m/ loses its syllabicity.

mti /'mti/ ⟩ muti /m'uti/ (tree)
mtu /'mtu/ ⟩ mutu /m'utu/ (person)
alimtuma /alimt'uma/ ⟩ alimutuma /alimut'uma/ (she sent him)
alimpa /ali'mpa/ ⟩ alimupa /alim'upa/ (he gave him)
"Congo Swahili Grammar" by W. F. Hunter, p.9.

6. In Congo Swahili, occasionally also in E. A. Swahili, an epenthetic /l/ appears between double vowels.
e.g. kataa ⟩ katala, kondoo ⟩ kondolo or kondoro.

7. Refer to previous footnote.

8. The combination /mj/ occurs only in 'mjanja' and is due to regressive non-contiguous assimilation.

9. Note that in Congo Swahili the nasal /m/ becomes /mu/ when it is a bound morpheme.
e.g. mtu ⟩ mutu; alimpa ⟩ alimupa.

10. We reserve the term "secondary stress" for a loudness weaker than that of the primary stress, and stronger than that of the tertiary stress. The secondary stress appears in intonation contours consisting of more than one microsegment, instead of the primary stress which is then suppressed by the sentence stress.

11. Anaptyxis: In Congo Swahili, and occasionally in the standardized East African Inter-Territorial Swahili, the final double vowel may be split by an anaptyctic /l/ or /r/.

E.A. Swahili			*Congo Swahili*	
shangaa	/sang'aa/	(be amazed)	shangala	/sang'ala/
kondoo	/kond'oo/	or kond'oro (sheep)	kondolo	/kond'olo/
upekee	/upek'ee/	(loneliness)	upekele	/upek'ele/
njaa	/nj'aa/	(hunger)	njala	/nj'ala/